PANEL HEARS TAPE OF EXTORTION BID

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Grand Jury Data Tell of '74 Demand Made on Hughes

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LOS ANGELES, July 24—The Los Angeles police tape-recorded a million-dollar extortion demand made on Howard R. Hughes in the 1974 theft of his personal files, according to grand jury testimony made public today.

The tape-recording was played last February to the Los Angeles County grand jury that indicted Donald R. Woolbright, former California automobile salesman, on counts of attempted extortion and receiving stolen property.

Mr. Woolbright surrendered in Los Angeles last week and pleaded not guilt y. His trial was set for Oct. 16 in the Superior Court here.

Under California law, grand jury testimony is made public 10 days after the arraignment of a defendant.

Mr. Hughes's headquarters here, at 7000 Romaine Street, were burglarized June 5, 1974, by four safecrackers who gained entry by threatening the lone guard on duty. At the time, Hughes officials reported that the burglars got $68,000 in cash and some art objects.

Early this year The New York Times learned that the burglars also made off with two boxes of Mr. Hughes's confidential files. Among the missing documents was a confidential memorandum on details of a secret Central Intelligence Agency contract with the billionaire's Summa Corporation for a covert attempt to retrieve a sunken Russian submarine from the Pacific Ocean.

According to the grand jury transcript, a man giving the name "Chester Brooks" made a series of telephone calls to the Hughes organization two weeks after the burglary. After the first call, the Los Angeles police installed a tape-recording device on the telephone of Nadine Henley, Mr. Hughes's long-time personal secretary.

In the tape-recording, Mr. "Brooks" told Mrs. Henley, "The total price that we're interested in procuring is $1-million for the contents. We want it in two separate drops. The first of which will be $500,000 for half the documents. The second will follow within a three-day period.' If there is at any time any breach of trust, the negotiations will stop at once."

A Hollywood movie actor and television scriptwriter, Ego Gordon, told the grand jury that he had listened to the tape recording and was "absolutely certain" that the voice of "Chester Brooks" was that of Mr. Woolbright.